

HOW TO... Share internet bookmarks

Do you want to see your favourite bookmarks on more than one PC? Simon Handby explains how to access them wherever you are, and even share them with friends

There seems to be no end to the interesting, useful or downright odd places you can visit on the internet. However, because web addresses are often too long or hard to remember, you often need to bookmark a site if you want to visit it again. You've probably used the Bookmark or Favorite features in browsers such as Firefox and Internet Explorer, but what if you have more than one computer, or you want your friends to see a great website?

Del.icio.us is a bookmarking website that allows you to store your favourites on the internet so you can access or add to them from any computer. You can also share them with others. The number of people using this 'social bookmarking' service has risen since its 2003 launch to well over three million, sharing more than 100 million unique web links between them. We'll show you how to sign up and start using the service, and how to get the most from its community.

1 Visit the site at <http://del.icio.us>. Before you can start using the service, you'll need to create a user account. Click on the register link in the top right-hand corner and enter your chosen username. Optionally, add your full name and an email address before specifying a password. You may have to try a couple of nicknames before you find one that's available.

2 Once you have a user account, you're ready to start using the service. You'll find it easiest to add new bookmarks and access any you have if you add del.icio.us's buttons to your web browser. In the next stage of the installation,

del.icio.us should detect the browser you're using and prompt you to install the appropriate buttons.

Recent browsers' security settings are likely to block the installation, so look out for a message bar at the top of the page. In Firefox, click the Edit Options button within this bar to allow the installation. If you have Internet Explorer, right-click the bar and allow the installation. If you need to install the buttons on a second computer, or you use more than one browser, you can return to <https://secure.del.icio.us/register?step2> to repeat the installation.

3 Once you've installed the del.icio.us buttons, it's easy to add new bookmarks. This is known as tagging. When you find a site you like, click the newly installed Tag button in your browser toolbar. Del.icio.us opens a small window confirming the web address and the page title, both of which you can edit. You can also add notes to remind yourself why you like a site and let others know why it interests you.

4 The Tag field, not to be confused with the Tag button used in the previous step, is very important. Here, you can specify keywords to help you keep your bookmarks organised. If the page you're bookmarking is a news story about internet access for air travellers, you might choose to add the tags 'internet', 'plane', 'travel' and 'news' before clicking Save.

If the site is popular, del.icio.us may display tags used by other people who have bookmarked it. You can add these tags by clicking them. You can also use this field to bring the site to another user's attention by adding for:username.

5 Once you've started to bookmark pages, you can access them by clicking the other button you installed in your browser, or by just visiting the del.icio.us homepage. The standard view shows your most recent bookmarks, the tags you used to classify them and whether any other users have sent you web links. If you want to see a certain type of site, simply click on a tag to display only the links for which you used that tag. You can use the related tags feature to refine the search further, or simply click on the title of a bookmark to go to that page.

If you find yourself using a lot of tags, you can choose to display them in a 'cloud' and elect to see only the tags that you have used several times. You can also use the rename feature to correct any typing errors, or to merge two similar tags such as 'magazine' and 'magazines'. By bundling tags, you can group related tags by themes such as 'technology' or 'environment'.

6 Remember that del.icio.us is designed to be a social service. You can view other people's bookmarks and, unless you enable the private saving feature, they can view yours. If you use a tag quite often then try visiting <http://del.icio.us/tag/tagname> to what other people have found on the subject. If you know a friend who's always finding great sites, you can browse through their bookmarks at <http://del.icio.us/<theirusername>>.

If you want to keep in touch with friends, colleagues or other great sources for links, try adding them to your network so a link to their del.icio.us profile is always at hand. **CS**

